

FEEDING YOUR BABY

You'll want to decide, before your baby is born whether to breastfeed or bottle-feed. Talk it over with your partner and your doctor. While healthy babies grow well with breast or bottle, breast milk provides special nourishment and protection from allergies and infections that formula does not. Whatever method you use, be sure to burp your baby during and after each feeding. Put a cloth on your shoulder and hold baby upright. Gently pat or rub her back.

Breastfeeding

- Breastfed newborns need to eat 8 to 12 times in 24 hours (usually once every 2 to 3 hours). In the first few days before your milk comes in, your breasts fill with colostrum. Colostrum has extra antibodies and other substances to help your baby fight infection, and just enough nutrients for a newborn. As your baby feeds, her nursing signals your body to start making milk.
- Sit up and hold your baby with her tummy touching your tummy. Cup your breast and tickle her lip with your nipple. When she opens her mouth, firmly bring her to your breast. To start milk flowing, your baby has to have at least one-half inch of your areola (the darker skin around the nipple) in her mouth. You should hear and see her swallow within a minute or two. If your nipples hurt or are cracked or bleeding, the baby has not latched on correctly. Check with your health care provider for further help.
- To be sure your baby is getting enough milk; look for at least 6 to 8 wet diapers and several bowel movements per day.

Feeding With Formula

Formula may be based on cow's milk, soy or foods less likely to set off allergies. It comes ready to serve, or in liquid or powder you mix with water. Check with your baby's doctor to see what kind of formula you will need.

- Newborns eat about 2 to 3 ounces of formula every 3 to 4 hours. Check the label to see if (and you use bottles with plastic liners, squeeze out all the air so it won't cause gas. Otherwise, tip the bottle to your baby could choke on the formula. Never heat a bottle in the microwave.
- Wash bottles, nipples, and anything used to prepare formula in hot, soapy water. Ask your doctor if you need to boil anything (including water to mix formula).
- Never put your baby to bed with a bottle because it's possible she could choke.

Starting Solid Foods

Don't start your baby on solid foods before 4 to 6 months unless told otherwise by your doctor. Early solids may add too many calories. They also may not be digested well or cause allergic reactions, because your baby's digestive tract and immune system are not yet mature.

- Start with rice cereal, then soft, smooth purees. Try one food at a time, and wait 3 to 5 days before adding a new food. That way, if your baby has a rash or other reaction, you'll know what caused the problem.



Resources

In addition to choosing a health care provider for your baby, it's also important to know where to look for quality support and education. These organizations can help:

American Academy of Pediatrics - (847) 434-4000 Children's health and parenting publications
La Leche League - (800) LALECHE Breastfeeding consultations and publications
March of Dimes - 1-888-MODIMES or www.marchofdimes.com